

## Grants Technical Assistant Tackles Tough Questions

By Don Luckett

Lots of folks with Ph.D.s come to work at CSR. Trevor Peterson, however, came to CSR so he could work on a Ph.D. He is studying ancient Near Eastern (Semitic) languages at Catholic University. The squiggly characters he studies are alien to most everyone at CSR, but Trevor fits in pretty well.



When he received a scholarship to work on his degree fulltime in 2000, he realized he needed a good part-time job. "I knew several people at school who had come to NIH," he says. "They worked part-time during the school-year and fulltime during the summers . . . got decent vacation and holidays and decent pay as far as part-time jobs go." Trevor investigated the possibilities and soon took a part-time job as a Grants Technical Assistant, facilitating NIH grant application reviews in CSR's Oncological Sciences Integrated Review Group.

Trevor says he has been pleased with his job at CSR because it never followed him home or to school and he likes his coworkers. "It's a very generous and cooperative group," he adds. "When I had comprehensive exams, they said 'let us know if you want to take some time off,' and they had a party for me when I passed."

"Right now, I'm working with my advisor on trying to get my topic hammered out," he says. "I'm interested in the way questions are formed in biblical Hebrew." He explains that the interpretation of a passage sometimes will hinge on whether something is a rhetorical question or a statement—which can look exactly the same. Scholars usually interpret these passages based on their gut feelings. Trevor, however, is wondering if there are linguistic clues that everyone is missing. It is difficult to say exactly where his dissertation will lead him. "Nothing earth shattering probably," he says, "but I might have an effect on the way things are translated . . . and on the way commentators understand specific passages."

Though his studies and work here seem as unrelated as stone and sky, Trevor sees a big connection: both involve working with language and text. Studying ancient languages has improved his understanding of English. He is now better able to proofread summary statements and advise some of the scientists in his group on the finer points of grammar. Benefits also have flowed in the other direction. Using computers at CSR to manage text has given him some ideas on using computers to simplifying the task of processing many ancient texts.

Trevor notes it will take at least a couple of years to complete his dissertation. "I'd like to work here until I finish," he says. "But that depends on what happens." Like many GTAs, he works under the CSR contract that has been affected by the government A-76 initiative to lower costs and improve efficiencies.

Nonetheless, Trevor is hopeful about the future and looks forward to the day when he has a teaching position. "Something very close to what I'm doing in biblical studies," he says, "and then go from there." Thinking about the future research he might conduct, he says he is grateful for being at CSR: "When it comes time to applying for funding, I'm going to know how the process works."

<p>עֵבֶר קָצִיר כָּלָה קוֹץ וְאַנְחָנוּ לֹא נוֹשְׁעָנוּ: עַל־שֹׁכֵר בַּת־עַמִּי הַשְׁבֵּרְתִּי קִדְרָתִי שָׁמָּה הַחֲזֹקְתָנִי: הֲאֵרִי אֵין בְּגִלְעָד אִם־רֹפֵא אֵין שָׁם כִּי מִדּוּעַ לֹא עָלְתָה אֲרֻכַּת בַּת־עַמִּי:</p>	<p>Harvest is past, summer is over; Our health is not restored. I am broken over the brokenness of my daughter-people. I am gloomy; horror has seized me. Is there no balm in Gil'ad, or no physician there? Then why hasn't the wound closed for my daughter-people?</p>
<p>Trevor tackles some tough questions in translating Jeremiah 8:20-22.</p>	